THE NEW
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## GST COLLECTION DECLINES TO ₹1.29 LAKH CRORE IN DEC

**The month's GST mop-up is slightly lower than the figures for November, which were the second highest since 2017**

### REVENUE RISES 13% YEAR-ON-YEAR

The Goods and Services Tax collection, an indicator of economic health, is 13% higher than it was in December 2020, due to a pickup in activity and anti-evasion steps, the government said. December is the sixth month in a row that the collection stood at over ₹1 lakh crore. The CGST was ₹22,578 crore, SGST ₹28,658 crore, IGST ₹69,155 crore and cess ₹9,389 crore

### GOVT EXPECTS BETTER MOP-UP IN Q4

- The average monthly collection for the third quarter (October-December) was ₹1.30 lakh crore, up from ₹1.10 lakh crore and ₹1.15 lakh crore in the first and second quarters, respectively
- The ministry said it expects the positive trend in revenue to continue in the fourth quarter of the financial year | P12

**5%**

FOOD DELIVERY PLATFORMS TO COLLECT & PAY GST FROM JANUARY 1

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# 12 dead in stampede at Vaishno Devi shrine

Two women among dead, 16 hurt in the incident that happened around 2.45 am; J&K govt sets up three-member panel to probe

**FAYAZ WANI** @ Srinagar

AT least 12 pilgrims, including two women, were killed and 16 others injured in a stampede at the Mata Vaishno Devi shrine in Katra of Jammu & Kashmir in the wee hours on Saturday.

Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha has set up a high-level inquiry panel headed by Principal Secretary (Home) Shaleen Kabra, with Divisional Commissioner Jammu Rajiv Langar and Additional Director General of Police Mukesh Singh as its members. The panel will probe the reason behind the stampede and fix responsibility, and submit its report within a week.

While pilgrims blamed the mismanagement of the temple administration, the Shrine board, chaired by Lt Governor Sinha, denied the charges saying all necessary arrangements were made in view of the expected rush. In a statement, the board claimed a scuffle between two groups led to the incident.

The stampede took place around 2.45 am near Gate No 3 when a large number of devotees queued up to have darshan of the sanctum sanctorum inside the cave shrine on Trikuta hills in Katra.

"There was a slope and somebody pushed and due to it some devotees fell on the ground and it led to a stampede," said Naresh, an eyewitness.

Director General of Police Dilbag Singh, who visited the site, said all aspects will be probed. "The area is narrow and people ran helter-skelter without knowing the reason. Most of the deaths have taken place due to suffocation and most of the injuries are also due to the same reason," he said.

Of the 12 dead, seven are from Uttar Pradesh, three from Delhi and one each from Haryana and J&K.

### 'Scuffle between two groups led to incident'

The Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board said "a scuffle between two groups of pilgrims" led to the incident, adding that only 35,000 pilgrims were allowed against the normal 50,000. The helpline numbers are: DC Reasi Control Room: 01991- 245763 / 9419839557, PCR Katra: 01991-232010/9419145182, and PCR Reasi: 01991245076/9622856295

**There was a huge rush of devotees but the flow was not managed properly. Even the yatra passes and Covid test reports were not checked**

Sandeep Kumar, an eyewitness

Relatives frantically looking for missing devotees | PTI

## TIKAIT

SAYS MSP PANEL NOT FOR LEADERS FIGHTING POLLS

Bharatiya Kisan Union leader Rakesh Tikait has demanded that the Union leaders who fight the polls should not be part of the committee on Minimum Support Price to be formed by the Central Government | P10

EXPRESS READ

### Top crypto service providers raided

New Delhi: The Directorate General of Goods and Service Tax Intelligence has reportedly raided half a dozen offices of cryptocurrency service providers and uncovered massive tax evasion. The searches were carried out in the backdrop of massive tax evasion by WazirX.

### 4 killed in landslide at mining site in Haryana

Haryana: Four people were killed and around 20 others trapped following a landslide at Dadam mining zone in Bhiwani district of Haryana on Saturday. Till evening, three people were rescued while four bodies were pulled out of the rubble. Sources said rescue work is going on. | P10

### India, Pak exchange list of nuclear sites

New Delhi: Continuing a 31-year practice, India and Pakistan on Saturday exchanged a list of their nuclear installations under a bilateral pact that prohibits the two sides from attacking each other's atomic facilities, the Ministry of External Affairs said.

### Four workers killed in TN cracker unit blaze

Virudhunagar (Tamil Nadu): Four workers were killed and eight others injured in a fire accident at a fireworks unit on Saturday at a village near here. It is yet to be ascertained if the blast and resultant blaze was due to inappropriate handling of chemical compounds or not.

LOOKING AHEAD 2022 STATE WILL WITNESS POLITICAL CHURN P4

# K'taka adds over 1,000 cases in a day

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Bengaluru

YEAR 2022 opened on a grim note with the state reporting 1,033 fresh Covid cases on Saturday, pushing the number of active cases to well over the 9,000-mark.

In a strong indicator of the resurgence of Covid cases and coming of a third wave, Karnataka recorded 1,000-plus cases for the first time since September 17, 2021, when the state saw 1,003 cases. According to the health department data, after October 6 — when the state saw 523 cases — Karnataka witnessed a 500-plus additions on December 29 with 566 cases. Just three days later, fresh cases have jumped almost two-fold, pointing to an increasingly rapid spread of the Covid infection, with many likely to be the Omicron variant of SARS-CoV-2 virus. However, the Omicron tally across the state is still small with only 66 positive cases found among the 30,08,370 who have tested positive so far through the pandemic.

The number of active cases, however, jumped from 8,712 on Friday to 9,386 on Saturday, recording a 7.73 per cent rise.

Bengaluru, which has been driving the surge, added 810 of the state's 1,033 cases. Active cases in the city jumped from 5,890 cases on December 25 to 7,876 on Saturday, recording a rise of 8.09 per cent. P3

A health worker collects swab samples in Bengaluru on Saturday | ASHISHKRISHNA G P

| NATIONWIDE | DEC 31 | JAN 1 |
|---|---|---|
| Fresh cases | 16,764 | 22,775 |
| Recoveries | 7,585 | 8,949 |
| Deaths | 220 | 484 |
| **KARNATAKA** | | |
| Fresh cases | 832 | 1,033 |
| Recoveries | 335 | 354 |
| Deaths | 8 | 5 |

JAB-O-METER
TAKE YOUR SHOT
December 31: 52,29,437 doses
January 1: 22,58,382 doses

## Minister Nagesh tests Covid +ve

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Bengaluru

PRIMARY and Secondary Education Minister BC Nagesh too tested positive for Covid on Saturday. The minister, who took to Twitter to announce that he has tested positive for COVID-19, stated, "I am quarantining and taking medical treatment. I request those who came in contact with me to get themselves tested for COVID-19."

Nagesh told The New Sunday Express that he has mild symptoms. He has now isolated himself at his home in Tiptur.

Tumakuru District Health Officer MB Nagendrappa said that the minister is stable and has quarantined himself.

# Industries to get land on 10-year lease, can own property after 2 yrs

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Bengaluru

THE state government is proposing changes in provisions of the Karnataka Industrial Area Development Board (KIADB), which will allow handing over of land to industries on a 10-year lease, instead of the present 99 years, and to sell properties to companies once they run their units successfully for a minimum of two years.

The changes were proposed after talks with senior officials of the industries department and other stakeholders in August and September, said Large and Medium Industries Minister Murugesh R Nirani.

The minister's office stated that the state cabinet recently cleared the proposal, while Nirani explained that industrialists are at present hesitating to invest in the state because of the existing policy. "The KIADB in future will allot all land to private industries/institutions on a 10-year lease cum sale basis. Rules are being framed for the new scheme and a full-fledged government order is expected to be issued over the next few days," he said.

"The 99-year lease clause was posing difficulties for industries to get loans, source capital and mortgage leased land. This hampered the flow of investment," he added.

The new amendment proposes that if any industry runs successfully for two years after getting the land allotted, it will qualify to get a clear sale deed from KIADB, he said. The department will monitor the balance sheet of industries for 24 months and proceed with the sale of land once it is convinced that the unit was being run successfully. "The amendment is expected to encourage industries to expand and invest more as the allotted land will be under their ownership," Nirani added.

## Real estate guidance value reduced by 10%

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Bengaluru

IN a New Year gift, the Karnataka government on Saturday reduced the guidance value of immovable properties across the state by 10 per cent for three months from January 1, 2022, which is expected to give a boost to the economy and allow the government to recover the loss in revenue suffered due to the Covid pandemic.

While reviewing the progress of the Department of Stamps and Registration on December 8, 2021, it was found that there was a deficit of Rs 2,021 crore in revenue collection during 2019-20.

Taking a cue from the Delhi government's decision to cut the guidance value by 20 per cent that resulted in a hike in revenue generation, the department had sent a proposal to the government to relax it by 10 per cent.

Inspector-General of Registration and Commissioner of Stamps Ravindra PN issued the order on Saturday.

CONTINUED ON: P4

### KARNATAKA EXCISE REVENUE UP BY 15 PC

Bengaluru: The Karnataka Excise Department has achieved a 15 per cent increase in revenue collection between April and December 2021-22, compared with the corresponding period in 2020-21, despite the second consecutive pandemic year. Official data showed that the department raked in ₹19,306.44 crore in revenue between April and December last year, compared to ₹16,786.78 crore in 2020-21 during the said period. P4

# Omicron in 22% virus samples nationally

SUMI SUKANYA DUTTA @ New Delhi

OMICRON is fast spreading to be the most dominant coronavirus strain in India, with its presence being found in over 22% samples collected from communities nationally.

The highest proportion of over 55% Omicron samples has been confirmed in Delhi and Maharashtra, the two states experiencing a near-exponential rise in Covid-19 cases, officials in INSACOG, a consortium of 38 laboratories, told this newspaper. INSACOG is India's genomic surveillance project for the coronavirus.

"In several cities, mainly Delhi and Mumbai, Omicron is already the dominant variant," said a senior official in the National Centre for Disease Control. The NCDC, which is under the Union health ministry, oversees INSACOG.

As of Saturday, India had 1,431 confirmed cases of the Omicron variant with the highest tallies from the national capital and Maharashtra. On Saturday evening, Delhi reported 2,716 fresh Covid-19 cases, West Bengal 4,512 and Maharashtra 9,170.

With the current rising trend in India's virus cases, biostatisticians are estimating that the number of daily infections can go past 1 lakh within a week.

While there is growing evidence that Omicron may be milder than Delta that caused a massive wave of Covid-19 infection last summer, authorities are worried that a sudden influx of too many patients in hospitals can still lead to a collapse of the healthcare system.

The concern has resulted in the Centre sending several advisories and guidelines to states over the last few days, suggesting rapid escalation in containment and case management measures. P9,14

**The fact that Delta was overtaken by Omicron so quickly in big cities is yet another reminder that this virus will sweep the entire country in weeks. The ascent and descent may be much faster than previous waves**

Senior official, National Centre for Disease Control

INTERVIEW

### No one can stop Cong from coming to power: DKS

In a chat with TNSE, KPCC chief DK Shivakumar says no one can stop the party from coming to power in the state and adds that the BJP is trying to create confusion about differences between Congress leaders |P4

# Jamia, IIT-D among 6K without FCRA nod

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ New Delhi

DAYS after the Union home ministry rejected the licence renewal for foreign funding for the Mother Teresa-founded Missionaries of Charity, the licences of thousands of organisations, including IIT Delhi, Jamia Millia Islamia, Indian Medical Association and Lady Shri Ram College for Women, ceased to exist or expired on Saturday.

The Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA) licences of 5,789 entities expired because they did not apply for renewal. The ministry rejected the renewal application of 179 other organisations. These organisations can no longer accept donations from abroad.

As many as 18,778 entities' licences were due to expire between September 29, 2020, and December 31. Among them, 12,989 had applied for renewal.

There were 22,762 FCRA-registered organisations till Friday, but on Saturday the number came down to 16,829.

Among those whose registrations lapsed were The Medical Council of India, Emmanuel Hospital Association (which runs over a dozen hospitals), Tubercolosis Association Of India, Vishwa Dharamayatan, Maharishi Ayurveda Pratishthan and National Federation Of Fishermen's Cooperatives.

### Oxfam also in the list

The entities whose FCRA registrations expired include Oxfam India, Godrej Memorial Trust, The Delhi Public School Society, Nuclear Science Centre in JNU, and India Habitat Centre

GOING BACK TO ROOTS

# *Techie-turned-farmer teaches kids about forgotten flora*

DONNA EVA @Bengaluru

HE is a storehouse of knowledge on Indian trees, plants and herbs, and in his farm, which is nothing like the traditional set-up, the flora grows wildly and naturally. Srivathsa Govindaraju, a software engineer-turned-farmer, started his farm 13 years ago with the intent of "respecting nature as it is and to understand how it functions".

From teaching families to forage to providing forestry training to police in their bid to fight Naxalites, he has done it all. Now, he looks towards collaborating with educational institutions and teaching children about a number of vital issues plaguing the agricultural industry through sustainable farming.

"India is blessed with a fantastic resource pool of plants and trees that we are forgetting and neglecting. We need to do more research and understand our ecosystem to know how it functions, which is why I have set up this farm to be a biodiversity awareness centre" he told The New Sunday Express.

His farm, 'Nature Inspires - Chiguru Ecospace', at Singadasanahalli village near Magadi spreads across 13 acres. "It doesn't please the eye and it looks wild. But it has a functioning ecosystem, which is something I work to retain," he says.

The farm has over 300 species of plants and trees, all either edible or used for medicinal purposes. CONTINUED ON: P5

Children learn the nitty gritties of organic farming at the farm of Srivathsa Govindaraju (left) at Singadasanahalli village near Magadi | EXPRESS